

Ecofeminist Analysis of Environmental Economics

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Abstract

The qualitatively new ecological situation is primarily a consequence of the consumer productive activity, which is based on confidence in the inexhaustible natural resources. But gender stereotypes that cause the interaction between nature and man, also greatly inhibit the solution of environmental and economic problems. In Western philosophy and economics, men's activity in nature is identified with work and productive force, while women's activity is mainly recognized as natural and reproductive activity, subsumed into men's production, and valued only individually and instrumentally. Contemporary environmental economics has to exclude this kind of identification. Acknowledging and valuing of women's work and its absolute necessity should be discussed, like that of inputs from the natural environment, for the continuation of economic processes. We argue that an ecofeminist discourse improves the process of valuing in environmental economics. Ecofeminist analysis of environmental economics helps to overcome the bias of the dualistic methodology in this field of the economic theory.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, environmental economics, gender stereotypes, decision-makers.

Introduction:

In 1997, Julie A. Nelson (1997) emphasized, "Neither feminism nor ecology is a subject of polite conversation within mainstream economics. One might perhaps find talk about women-in-the labor-force or about environmental-and-resource economics to be acceptable, though considered non-central to the discipline" (p.155). How is the situation changed until now? Some aspects of the problem have become clearer. On the one hand, environmental economics was distinguished from ecological economics as a more theoretical component of mainstream economics. Ecological economics

regards the economy as a subsystem of the ecosystem with its focus upon preserving nature. This gives sometimes a reason to criticize it for excessive idealism (Van den Bergh, 2001, p. 14). On the other hand, environmental economics was blamed in approaches the topic in the traditional reductionist manner common in neoclassical literature (Barker, 2013). L. Illge and R. Schwarze (2006) found that ecological and environmental economics are different schools of economic thought (p. 595). This kind of 'scientific competition' has provided the ground for solutions to societal problems of sustainable development.

Main Text:

The purpose of this article is to find the new arguments in favor of deepening the content of environmental economics offered by ecofeminist analysis. The ideas such as that gender might structure economic activities, and that natural constraints might put limits on economic expansion, will be discussed as interconnected.

In our opinion, the most correlative analysis of environmental economics comes from the social version of ecofeminism, insisting that the destruction and exploitation of nature by men is rooted in the dominance of men over women. In this respect, ecofeminist analysis enhances the methodological foundations of environmental economics. Whereas many environmentalists identify industrialization and new technologies as appropriate tools for economic growth, the representatives of the ecofeminist approach believe that the proliferation of technology should be balanced and more attention must be paid to pollution and natural resource preservation. They look forward to self-sufficient, decentralized relations of production, where men and women work together in reciprocity with external nature, no longer alienated or diminished by a gendered division of labor and international accumulation (Bauhardt, 2015; Perkins, 2007; Rifkin, 2014).

To achieve this purpose we will consider ecofeminist and philosophical standpoints of Val Plumwood, Ariel Salleh, Maria Mies and others. Ecofeminist philosophy is dialogical in nature, as a kind of remark, response, reaction or comment on already formulated postulates, axioms, theorems, and conclusions. Despite criticism, it is not just an echo of the views that dominate the patriarchal classical economy. It is this approach that allowed the Australian philosopher V. Plumwood to identify and analyze the five main features of 'the logic of colonization', namely: the backgrounding qualities, radical exclusion, lack of valued traits, homogenization, and instrumentalism (Plumwood, 1993).

We have refracted these ideas into the context of modern environmental economics, which examines in what ways industrialization and new technologies can continue without causing any harm to nature or with the

least damage possible. In strictly economic terms, people – it is a means of production, and gender equality is more effective competition in the labor market.

Women have made huge progress in the workplace, but they still get lower pay and far fewer top jobs than men. Why? Because in the context of traditional backgrounding qualities the monetary value of their jobs is underestimated.

Jane Turner (2019) found the following:

Male-dominated industries could increase their productivity in many countries by up to 25% through improved female workforce participation; better gender equality on boards is proven to lead better share price and financial performance, and more gender-balanced leadership results in better all-around performance. Also, when women are elected to office in countries with internal unrest, these economies can experience a significant boost compared with results under male leaders.

When women have equal opportunities (not formally, but in fact), it increases the number of trained workers in the economy and increasing competition for key positions. Competition in the labor market, in turn, means better value for money and quality of work, and thus gives the employer the opportunity to invest, create jobs, and create further economic growth. In this context, ecofeminist analysis highlights eco-critical concerns towards sustainable development and preserving natural resources and ecosystems. Ecofeminists reject the mainstream assumption that economic growth will automatically bring a reduction in gender inequality

Here, it is important to emphasize once again the attitude to technological development. Maria Mies (1993) indicated that the development of technology in a capitalist patriarchal society is not meant to make human beings happy but to allow continuing accumulation of profit. Industrialization and technological development lead to the exploitation of marginalized classes in society. She also focused on biotechnologies that are designed to manipulate and appropriate women's ability to reproduce, so reducing their human dignity. On her opinion, the merits and demerits of technology depend on its application, its accessibility for all people and its effect on social relations. These findings are still relevant.

Claiming equality as being achieved simply by being allowed membership within the dominant group is methodologically wrong. According to environmental sociologist John Barry (1999), the original form of ecofeminism dates back to "Vindication of the Rights of Women" written by Mary Wollstonecraft and published in 1792 (p. 184). But M. Wollstonecraft advocated that equality could be achieved on the basis that women are no less rational than men, therefore placing women in opposition to animals. Contemporary ecofeminists insist that rather we must seek

emancipation by denying patriarchal dominance. We must question the terms in which emancipation has been framed.

Ecofeminism takes care not to sentimentalize nature. Ecofeminist relationship to nature is the ethics of mutuality, interdependence, and respects of the interests and needs of the 'other'. Besides, we don't need simply reverse dualism, as rationality is bad and nature is good. While revaluing this bond is important, we need to revalue relationships between men and women and between men and nature. An equal potential for men is to adopt nature-friendly practices and values.

As for society as whole gender equality in economic terms is beneficial it needs to invest. For example, through the establishment of equal educational opportunities, promoting equitable distribution of the efforts of childcare between men and women, promoting equal opportunities for career development, including reserved seats in the corporate and public administration. In her economical studies, Irene Van Staveren (2010) has shown, "...gender inequality can be bad for growth because inequality excludes women from production, it demotivates efforts for improvement and hence keeps female productivity low, it may cause social conflict chasing away investment, and it allows for male rent-seeking" (p. 18).

Paul B. Farrell (2014) outlined it in a little bit ironic, yet traditionally dualistic form of radical exclusion: "The end of men is really the end of a manufacturing-based economy". Six million lost jobs since 2000, mostly men, creating a vacuum. As a result, "a new matriarchy is emerging: For the first time in history, the global economy is becoming a place where women are finding more success than men ... run by young, ambitious, capable women ... taking matters into their own hands".

Ecofeminist analysis in the wide societal context should be relevant to such collective approaches to economic issues, which rest on values such as co-operation, empathy and nurture stemming from a relational, nonhierarchical view of the world; a focus on process than end results; the belief that social change begins with personal transformation; and attention to intuition, subjectivity creativity and spontaneity. Numerous modern studies have shown that the higher the level of women's participation, the better the economic results at the level of both the company and the country, and the world. Of course, it is important to understand the cause and effect relationship: the mechanical performance does not improve the women inclusion on boards of directors and simultaneous resolving of the environmental problems. The intelligent policy of human capital management leads to the fact that the posts are appointed by the most worthy candidates. In turn, the presence of women in the governing bodies of companies and states usually means that at least some elements of such a policy in the organization are present.

Through the give-and-take of argument, participants of the ecological discourse on environmental problems can learn from each other, come to recognize their individual and collective misapprehensions and develop new views and policies that can more successfully withstand critical scrutiny. Discourse is not a regular academic discussion. It is not only a limited influence speech act of formal negotiations or domestic dispute that ends with someone's last words. It is of practical importance, as being directly related to human activities and actions.

Ecofeminist discourse does not only provide information on the gender dimension of environmental communication, but it also changes the convictions of the opponents. Public discussion of environmental issues in gender dimension enhances the quality of judgments of participants, provides the free exchange of ideas between men and women, or rather, between advocates of gender and patriarchal approach to environmental communication. Together clarifying the possible consequences and comparing the merits of different choices, subjects of the ecofeminist discourse can come to decisions that were previously envisaged.

Ecofeminist discourse has to be aimed at consensus, but not to compromise, because under these conditions, men have denied patriarchal dictates, and women do not have and may not have the opportunity for unilateral dictates. So, in this light, it (conditionally) accepts the telling of personal stories, rhetoric, humor, ceremonial speech, even gossip, as well as arguments. Threats, lies, abuse, and command have no place. When properly conducted, then, discourse-based methods of ecosystem service valuation would provide a forum of manifest equality among a small group of citizen-stakeholders and involve open deliberation focused on the task of reaching consensus about the social value of an ecosystem good or service. Developing this idea, M. Wilson and R. Howarth (2002) suggested, "While not limited to economic values, we nevertheless believe that value statements derived using discursive methods may be quite meaningfully reported in terms of dollars because these can then be used to complement and compare with results from more traditional valuation methods used in cost-benefit analysis (i.e. contingent valuation)" (p. 436).

Ecofeminist discourse involves increasing the role of women within the framework of a consequential discussion of environmental decisions. "Consequential" means deliberation must have some influence. It asserts that instead of going against or neglecting new technologies, environmental economics might introduce new technology in consonance with nature. Ecofeminist arguments are rarely truly anti-technological. Rather, they place an emphasis on 'appropriate' technology which holds central the relationships between technology and society and the impact of technology on the environment. A. Salleh (2002) in her article "The Dystopia of Technoscience:

An Ecofeminist Critique of Postmodern Reason" rejects Haraway's cyborg manifesto. She claims that by introducing the concept of the cyborg, Haraway supports "capitalist patriarchal technoscience...[which] presents a dystopia that confuses the political focus of feminism ... and consumes the support system of all life on earth" (p. 201). In contrast to the resource greedy technologies of capitalist patriarchal economics, A. Salleh supports simpler forms of social organization which can sustain human needs while still regenerative of nature.

Nowadays, people are becoming aware that nature is the indivisible overarching community to which we all belong and whose well-being is obligatory to assuring our own well-being as well as our survival. The profound awareness comes with a new logic of responsibility in our lives, business, and communities. This is the way to overcome 'the logic of colonization' of nature and women in V. Plumwood understanding.

Contemporary American economic and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin (2014) connecting the solution of environmental problems with the development of IT, Internet of things, 3D printer, nanotechnologies, at the same time, makes some unexpected assumption, "By reopening the various Commons, humanity begins to think and act as part of a whole. We come to realize that the ultimate creative power is reconnecting with one another and embedding ourselves in ever-larger systems of relationships that ripple out to encompass the entire set of relationships that make up the biosphere Commons" (p. 148-149). Some specialists do not agree with this conclusion. They distinguish two problems with this view: one of false extrapolation and one of political naiveté. Simple livings in peripheral communities today rely on the surplus — and the products and infrastructures — provided by the rest of the industrial economy. Scaling up existing voluntary simplicity experiences to the societal level may entail much more hardship than what members of individual projects experience today. Kallis, G., Kerschner, C., and Martinez-Alier J. (2012) concluded, "Some voluntary downshifters do not mind such hardship. But these are typically people who had a choice between simplicity and meaningless affluence. It does not follow that others, such as those who never had the choice, or those that enjoy their power, will not mind either" [9, p. 3].

But it is a fact of the globalized world, that, in spite of the unprecedented rise in worldwide urbanization, the majority of the world's working women still lives and work in rural areas. The contribution made by rural women to the well-being of the household, the community, and the national economy, is not sufficiently recognized. Rural women are seldom addressed as women workers in their own right. While this statistical and social invisibility is more acute in some traditional, subsistence and family-based farming systems and informal economies; the situation is by no means

confined to particular regions. Ecofeminist analysis rejects homogenization, averaging and instrumentalism as a research methodology. Insufficient understanding of the gender differentials in the rural labor market and the gender blindness of policies have often led to de-facto discrimination against women in the national development agenda. Climate change brings new challenges and deepens old problems. It has serious ramifications in four dimensions of food security: food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, and food systems stability. According to “Women and Climate Change: Prize Winners and Finalists of the European Greens Essay Contest” (2011), “While mitigation of climate change seems a Western, male-dominated realm, adaptation to climate change seems the realm of women in developing countries” (p. 7).

To understand the nature of women's involvement in rural labor market, the definition of employment and work in rural setting, especially when women are concerned, should go beyond the narrowly defined statistical categories, grasping the formal sector wage employment into encompassing a broader conception, which gives due recognition to activities outside agriculture and to domestic care and maintenance. Therefore, women in the rural labor market confront a particular dilemma, as they are in fact over-employed in terms of hours worked, and under-employed in terms of income received to labor.

Women, especially in rural areas, combine multiple activities and therefore may change occupational statuses in one day or over a determined period of the year. Ensuring survival in such conditions, women acquire important social skills that are in demand in the wider social and economic context. It is not uncommon that women may be working partly as wage-employer, partly as own-account manager or unpaid family laborers on their household land, and run a micro-enterprise venture at home, in addition to household and childcare and maintenance roles. However, working long hours and undertaking multiple jobs is not a guarantee of decent remuneration. C. Bauhardt (2015) attributes this situation to the crisis of social reproduction. She rightly argues: “The crisis of capitalism should be analyzed as the finiteness of natural resources as well as the finiteness of women's caring labor” (p. 13). After summarizing the literature on a variety of existing sustainability indicators, feminist economists proposed a way of assessing the sustainability of household quality-of-life improvements. Patricia E. Perkins (2007) concluded, “Their 18 indicators include material use, energy use, water use, waste and emissions, space use, transport, organic products, equity, health, safety/security, comfort, social contacts, empowerment, information/awareness, employment, financial situation, regionality, and profitability” (p. 231).

Starting from a disadvantaged position, women are particularly vulnerable to the effects of external shocks, whether these relate to events in their life-cycle such as family breakdowns; or natural disasters like droughts and crop failures; or adverse effects of economic reform policies. In Ukraine too, women and mostly rural women are bearing the major brunt of economic transition, while they play a crucial role in ensuring the households' well-being and survival. Men raised in cultures with traditional patriarchal values feel even more threatened as women gain equality and power as decision-makers. Deep depression is often the result of this social problem and not vice versa. Typically, under such conditions, women undertake the extra care related to the health of husband or other male family members (in other words, they choose inclusive tactics).

Actually, the only reason that the traditional way of women had fewer opportunities to play a key role in the economic and social life is associated with the birth of a large number of children. It deprives society of incentives to invest in their education. Urbanization, development of medical technology and means of production, including in the most labor-intensive sectors such as agriculture, reduce the need for large numbers of unskilled workers, for which the family has historically struck up many children. Putting forward the requirements for environmental economics, C. Bauhardt (2015) notes, "Hence, the Green New Deal must set itself the objective to better integrate women into technical professions in the energy, transport, and construction sectors. The future will show if this allows for more environmentally sound technical solutions as well as social innovations" (p. 10).

It is also important to mark, that according to "Statistics on the purchasing power of women" (2019), "Women account for 85% of all consumer purchases". The decision to buy was taken by women not only in terms of clothing, food, and cosmetics, but also in technology, real estate, financial services, and cars. The conclusions of the environmental economy about this post-Keynesian policy are not yet clear.

Conclusion:

Therefore, ecofeminist analysis of environmental economics proves that, on the one hand, the gender structures economic activities. On the other hand, natural constraints put limits on economic expansion. In recent decades, such negative features as prejudice, radical isolation, grouping, defined in terms of lack, homogenization, and instrumentalism that impede the solution of environmental problems, have been somewhat overcome. Ecofeminist discourse improves the process of valuing in environmental economics disclosing the bias of the dualistic methodology in this field of economic theory. On this base, the absolute necessity of acknowledging and valuing

women's work, like that of inputs from the natural environment, find their confirmation.

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